

City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA)

Currently, one of RRHA's strongest elements for the Jobs Plus Program is the Community Support for Work component. Virginia's Roanoke Valley has a great number of supportive services available to low-income families. Not only are there a great number of resources available, but the interagency collaboration that takes place ensures that individuals in need of assistance receive comprehensive services allowing them to overcome a variety of employment barriers. RRHA currently partners with agencies providing everything from financial management classes to healthy eating workshops. The Jobs Plus program will be able to build on existing collaborations and partnerships in order to provide its participants with the necessary resources and supports to find and maintain employment.

One of the partnerships that the Jobs Plus program will greatly benefit from is *Bank On Roanoke Valley*, sponsored by the United Way. This is a consortium of more than thirteen local financial institutions working to improve the financial stability of families. Among other services, participating banks and credit unions offer second chance, no fee checking and savings accounts for those who have had negative or no experience with financial institutions in the past. On-site financial management classes and individual financial counseling afford participants the opportunity to examine their current financial status and build the skills necessary to plan for the future. Participants also learn about predatory lending and rent-to-own challenges. For many residents who do not have a substantial income, it is a building block to improve their financial well-being and achieve financial stability.

RRHA also collaborates with many dedicated organizations and stakeholders who are working to create a shared vision and evidence based strategies that tackle the issue plaguing low-income families in the Roanoke Valley. One of the agencies working closely with RRHA is the Virginia Cooperative Extension, in conjunction with Virginia Tech. They provide on-site educational opportunities including healthy cooking and nutritional workshops. Participants are given the opportunity to learn and participate in all aspects of healthy eating. Another agency that assists in this endeavor is the Southwest Virginia Food Bank, who visits the Jobs Plus site monthly with the Veggie Mobile, delivering bags of fresh produce to residents at no cost. RRHA also participates in the PATH Coalition, a local initiative funded through the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth. This coalition focuses on the need to increase healthy food offerings, safety and access to parks and other recreation. These and other community offerings supply local families the opportunities to improve their health and quality of life.

These collaborations are just a small sample of the existing resources that will enable the Jobs Plus Program to accomplish the Community Support for Work component. Roanoke Valley's supportive service providers continue to show their willingness to partner with RRHA and other agencies in order to improve the lives of those families who need assistance in overcoming challenges that prevent them from job readiness, job placement, and job retention.